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Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the attached report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women (E/AC.51/2000/3). The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

* E/AC.51/2003/1.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions resulting from an in-depth evaluation.

This triennial review concludes that the advancement of women programme has implemented or taken adequate measures towards implementing the recommendations of the evaluation of the programme endorsed by the Committee in 2000. In some instances, the results are already observable. For example, the exceptional measures adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, including holding additional meetings and allowing States parties to combine outstanding reports into one report, resulted in a significant decrease in the backlog of States parties' reports awaiting consideration by the Committee.

Inter-agency coordination, communication and information have been enhanced by more extensive exchange of experience during the meetings of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, and through the establishment of an Inter-Agency Network web site. The review noted that the task forces of the Inter-Agency Network were frequently collaborating and sharing work plans and strategies.

With respect to the monitoring of the status of women in the Secretariat, the Office of Human Resources Management has postponed issuance of a new Secretary-General's bulletin on policies to achieve gender equality, as it is believed to be too soon to assess the impact on gender issues of the new recruitment, promotion and placement system which came into effect in May 2002.

Regarding the dissemination of information, the Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that the Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the Sales and Marketing Section of the Department of Public Information, has developed a multiple-channel marketing approach. Consultations between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Department of Public Information would have been more effective, however, if they had been initiated during the planning stage of the programme of publications. The timeliness and content of information posted on the advancement of women web sites have improved. Several online discussions with non-governmental organizations and other concerned groups, in preparation for sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, were held during the period. The efforts of the Division for the Advancement of Women to facilitate the work of non-governmental organizations has resulted in an increase in the number of those organizations which attend the sessions of the Commission. The Division should continue to review the respective organizational arrangements for the presentation of non-governmental organizations positions to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

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I. Introduction

1. At its fortieth session, in 2000, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme (E/AC.51/2000/3). The Committee endorsed recommendations 1 to 10 (a) of the evaluation report, concerning the following issues: improving the effectiveness of the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; increasing the participation of other entities of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations in the work of the programme; and improving the dissemination of information.[1]

2. The present report contains the findings of the triennial review conducted to determine the extent to which the recommendations endorsed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination three years ago have been implemented. The status of implementation of the recommendations is discussed under the following headings: Support to the intergovernmental processes; Monitoring the status of women in the Secretariat; Coordination; and Outreach.

3. The advancement of women programme is implemented by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Division provides substantive services to relevant intergovernmental bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The triennial review is based on (a) the information provided by the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division on progress they made in implementing the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, a process which is monitored twice a year by the Office of Internal Oversight Services; (b) a review of the relevant documentation and information obtained from the programme and concerned organizations; and (c) consultations with staff of the programme, organizations of the United Nations system and relevant non-governmental organizations.

II. Findings

A. Support to intergovernmental processes

Recommendation 1
Support to enhance the effectiveness of the reporting mechanism of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

(a) *Backlog*. The secretariat of the Committee should further study ways to reduce the backlog and propose to the Committee targets and methods to achieve this objective.

(b) *Overdue reports*. The secretariat should propose to the Committee a plan to reduce the number of overdue reports by considering the adoption of procedures that have been used by other treaty bodies, such as sending periodic

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 16* and corrigenda (A/55/16 and Corr.1 and 2), paras. 245-257.

reminders to States parties and encouraging those States parties that have never submitted an initial report (54 as of December 1999) to request technical assistance.

(c) Given the emphasis placed by the Committee on openness to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the secretariat should ensure that concerned NGOs are informed of a State party's presentation of its report sufficiently in advance to allow them to participate in the meetings, that they are provided with the relevant guidelines and that they are encouraged to translate their reports into the working languages of the United Nations, taking into account the understanding of the Committee for Programme and Coordination that notification of consideration of reports would continue to be provided in the *Journal of the United Nations* and that all non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations already had an obligation to translate their reports into the working languages of the United Nations.[2]

4. In regard to the issue of the backlog in the consideration of States parties' reports by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, addressed in recommendation 1 (a), the Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that the backlog has diminished from 48 reports in December 1999 to 17 reports in February 2003. This reduction can be attributed to the following measures: (a) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women decision 23/II of June 2000 allowing States parties on an exceptional basis to combine outstanding reports into a single document to be considered at the same session; (b) in 2001, the General Assembly approved the request of the Division for the Advancement of Women for an exceptional session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to reduce the backlog. During that session, held in August 2002, the Committee considered 14 reports submitted by 11 States parties.

5. As the number of outstanding reporting obligations by States parties to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, raised in recommendation 1 (b), continued to be an issue, the Committee at its twenty-seventh session, in June 2002, adopted a strategy to improve reporting by States parties. The main elements of this strategy are (a) systematic reminders to States parties whose reports are more than five years overdue, drawing their attention to Committee decision 23/II on the consolidation of reporting obligations and the availability of technical assistance; (b) informal meetings between Committee members and non-reporting States parties to discuss challenges to timely reporting; and (c) encouraging the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations entities to provide technical assistance to States parties at their request (A/57/38 (Part II), para. 369). In 2002, the Committee also requested its secretariat (i.e., the Women's Rights Unit of the Division) to provide it with an analysis of the reasons for non-reporting by States parties for consideration at the twenty-ninth session, in June/July 2003. The Committee has also scheduled, during its twenty-ninth session, a meeting with States parties whose reports are overdue by more than five years to further explore solutions to the problem.

6. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that the Division for the Advancement of Women has provided information about the technical assistance

[2] Ibid., para. 256.

services it offers to States parties upon their request at meetings of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as at a meeting with States not parties (January 2003), and during consultations with individual States.

7. In implementing recommendation 1 (c), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women identifies States whose reports will be considered by the Committee and notifies them three sessions (18 months) in advance. Non-governmental organizations are informed of these schedules through the report of the Committee and the information posted on the Division's web site as well as through the *Journal of the United Nations*. As is noted in paragraph 30 below, the Division gave priority to time-sensitive material and disseminated it through the web site as soon as it became available. Non-governmental organizations are entitled to submit reports to the Committee and also to address the Committee and its pre-sessional working group. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that one NGO, International Women's Rights Action Watch, has developed a set of guidelines for non-governmental organizations, in consultation with the Committee and the Division. NGOs have oeen encouraged to translate their reports to the Committee into the working languages of the United Nations.

8. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is of the opinion that there was significant progress regarding the issues identified in recommendations 1 (a) and (b) and that necessary steps were taken regarding implementing recommendation 1 (c).

Recommendation 2
Enhance efforts to promote the work of CEDAW

The Division for the Advancement of Women should indicate on its web site that the summary records of the Committee are available in hard copy and how interested parties can obtain them, and publication of *The Work of CEDAW* should be terminated.

9. Each volume of *The Work of CEDAW* contains the reports on sessions held during a given year and the corresponding summary records of the discussions already issued as documents of the United Nations. The last volume of the series, volume IV, was published in 1997 and included documents pertaining to the sessions held in 1989. Given the 10-year backlog of publications and the fact that the documents contained in the publications are available sooner in print as official documents and in electronic format (web sites of the Division for the Advancement of Women), the Office of Internal Oversight Services recommended in 2000 that the publication be discontinued. As recommended, the Division has not published any further volumes since 1997. In its comments on an earlier draft of this report, the Division stated that *at the last Committee session in January 2003, members of the Committee regretted the fact that the summary records were so late and that* The Work of CEDAW *was not available. The Division also stated that its goal is to make* The Work of CEDAW *available on the web site as that would be the most efficient way of disseminating information on the Committee.* The Office of Internal Oversight Services is in agreement with that objective and noted that the summary records issued are delayed by an estimated average of two years.

B. Monitoring the Status of Women in the Secretariat

Recommendation 3
A new Secretary-General's bulletin

In order to encourage the implementation of the newly revised special measures, ST/SGB/282 of 5 January 1996 should be revised to reflect the stronger measures endorsed by the General Assembly.

10. Updating the Secretary-General's bulletin on policies to achieve gender equality was postponed as a result of a new recruitment, promotion and placement system which came into effect on 1 May 2002. Under the new system, the heads of Department or Office have direct responsibility for ensuring equal representation of women at all levels. As it is too soon to assess the impact of the new system on the representation of women (see A/57/447, para. 59), the Office of Human Resources Management has postponed the issuance of a revised Secretary-General's bulletin. A review of the new recruitment, promotion and placement system will be required to identify precisely what special measures may be needed to achieve gender balance in the United Nations Secretariat.

11. Implementation of recommendation 3 was postponed owing to changes in the system of recruitment, promotion and placement.

C. Coordination

Recommendation 4
Improving coordination within the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

(a) In order to ensure regular contact, the Division for the Advancement of Women should propose to the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality the creation of an electronic information network among members of that Committee for monthly e-mail briefings on substantive issues discussed at Headquarters and New York-based agencies and follow-up to task force discussions. This would facilitate more regular sharing of information.

(b) The Division for the Advancement of Women should propose to the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, extending the duration of the Committee's meetings by one or two days or have a one- or two-day "preparatory" to the Committee with specific items for in-depth discussion.

12. In connection with the use of an inter-agency electronic information network raised in recommendation 4 (a), the Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that much of the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, now the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, is currently carried out electronically, both throughout the Inter-Agency Network and within its task forces set up to work on particular issues, thus increasing the regular sharing of information. Communication and information-sharing on the activities and outputs of the Network was also facilitated by the launching of an Inter-Agency Network web site in December 2002.

13. The Office of Internal Oversight Services concludes that much progress was made in implementing recommendation 4 (a). Monthly e-mail briefings have not been established as recommended but considering that, at this time, various Inter-Agency Network task forces have different schedules and meeting requirements, flexibility exercised by the task force managers in determining the frequency of electronic communication with their respective members is a more effective approach. Systematic use of these methods of communicating should continue to be encouraged by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues. For example, notices for intersessional Inter-Agency Network meetings should be posted well ahead of the meetings to promote internal consultations within each organization.

14. The implementation of the recommendation to extend the duration of the inter-agency meetings (recommendation 4 (b)) has resulted in the duration of the annual meetings of the Inter-Agency Network being extended from three to four days. Of those four days, one day is devoted to a workshop on methods for gender mainstreaming which allows for the exchange of ideas and experiences on gender mainstreaming among members of the Network. The Office of Internal Oversight Services also concludes that recommendation 4 (b) was implemented.

Recommendation 5
Greater coordination between the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations programmes and entities

(a) Regular discussions of strategies and annual work plans should take place at the senior level between the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations programmes and entities, taking into consideration their comparative advantage.

(b) United Nations entities providing gender advisory services, such as the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNDP, UNIFEM and the regional commissions, should exchange work plans and take other measures to ensure that activities in this area are well coordinated and reflect comparative advantage.

15. The intent of recommendation 5 was to prevent duplication and promote consistency in gender policies and strategies throughout the United Nations system. the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have continued the practice established in 1995 of formulating a joint annual work plan which is submitted to both the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights. Both the Special Adviser and the Director of the Division hold high-level discussions on policies and strategies for gender mainstreaming and gender balance with representatives of other United Nations entities as well as with heads of departments and offices in the Secretariat, including the regional commissions. Consultations were held with all Gender Focal Points in organizations represented in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs in the preparation of the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

16. As part of their work as task managers and chairs of several of the Inter-Agency Network task forces, both the Special Adviser and the Director of the Division have coordinated the preparation of joint action and work plans. The Special Adviser's participation in the Executive Committees on Economic and Social Affairs, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Affairs has provided

opportunities for exchanges on the work done on gender equality in the United Nations. The report on the second session of the Inter-Agency Network has been forwarded to the High-level Committees on Programmes and Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

17. Increased coordination between the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations organizations found concrete expression in joint projects. An example of effective collaboration is the task force chaired by the Office of the Special Adviser to support the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The 18-member task force jointly monitors the implementation of various aspects of the resolution, in which the Council underlined the vital role of women in conflict resolution and mandated a review of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building, and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution. The preparation of the study requested by the Council, entitled *Women, Peace and Security*,[3] was coordinated by the Special Adviser in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Network task force. The study was completed in 2002. A second example of collaboration is the gender mainstreaming kit prepared jointly by the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division and based on the good practices of the United Nations system. It is expected that the kit, which will be updated periodically, will support the Organization's strategy to achieve gender equality in programmatic and operational work. Expert group meetings organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women are usually held in close collaboration with relevant organizations of the United Nations system. For example, at the three expert group meetings held in 2002, collaboration was established with the Department of Public Information, the Office on Drugs and Crime, ESCWA, UNESCO, ITU and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force.

18. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is of the opinion that significant progress was achieved in implementing recommendation 5 (a). More could be done, however, to improve the access of the Department of Public Information to advance information on activities undertaken by the Division for the Advancement of Women, especially those carried out away from Headquarters, so that the global network of United Nations information centres can be fully involved in providing promotional services for those activities. In preparation for the conference to be held in 2005, 10 years after the Beijing Conference, the Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that the process of coordination with the regional commissions should be initiated as early as possible to allow sufficient time for the consolidation of regions' position papers into the global position paper. In its comments on an earlier draft of this report, the Division for the Advancement of Women stated that *the process of coordination with the regional commissions in planning for the 10-year review and appraisal is well under way and a series of meetings were held in February 2003 in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Network and the Commission on the Status of Women. The Special Adviser is visiting ECLAC in April 2003 to further discuss cooperation on this matter, among other issues.*

19. With regard to the need to improve the coordination of gender advisory services raised in recommendation 5 (b), the Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that, in 2002 and 2003, meetings were held with the Gender Focal

[3] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.IV.1.

Points of the regional commissions, in the context of the inter-agency meeting in New York, to discuss collaboration and coordination around technical cooperation programmes. It was agreed that this consultation meeting would be held annually. These consultations are part of the efforts of the Division for the Advancement of Women to ensure that technical cooperation activities are well coordinated. The Division collaborates with the regional commissions, for example, in relation to the activities to strengthen the capacity of national mechanisms for gender equality, to support implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to enhance the role of women in the peace and security process as requested in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In order to enhance coordination and reduce the risk of overlap, UNIFEM, UNDP and UNFPA are also invited to participate and contribute to those activities, where appropriate.

20. It is the opinion of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that significant steps were taken towards implementing recommendation 5 (b).

D. Outreach

Recommendation 6
Marketing and distribution of the Division for the Advancement of Women publications

In close collaboration with other relevant departments, the Division for the Advancement of Women should identify potential target audiences and develop different marketing and distribution approaches for various types of publication, based on the commercial potential of the publication:

(a) With respect to publications that are issued as sales publications as a matter of record or for other non-commercial reasons, print runs should be small; the information contained in these publications should be posted on the WomenWatch web site.

(b) Publications that are of potential commercial significance should be financed, produced, advertised and sold so as to maximize sales revenues, with online information made available in a manner that protects the United Nations commercial interest in those publications. For these, advertising, book launches and other publicity events should be organized.

(c) Not-for-sale publications should be issued in an inexpensive print form and included on the WomenWatch web site.

21. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Sales and Marketing Section of the Department of Public Information have worked closely during the period on developing and executing plans for the promotion of publications of the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division, an issue addressed in recommendation 6 (b). It is noted that direct collaboration usually begins when the preparation of a publication is well under way. As a result of these consultations, a marketing strategy focusing on multiple channels is adopted. publications of the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division are featured on the United Nations publications web site and in their catalogue of sales publications and are submitted to online bookstores (such as Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com). Copies are sent to key journals soliciting reviews, special promotions are offered to academics, and copies are exhibited at major international professional and book industry

conferences. Direct mail projects and advertisement include fliers and a catalogue on women publications. In addition, the Division's publications are distributed and exhibited during major conferences, meetings and events. In its comments on an earlier draft the Division stated that it produces very few publications (one in 2001 and three in 2002) and that collaboration with the Department of Public Information cannot begin before a publication is planned.

22. Non-sale publications of the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division are posted on the Division's web site and distributed during major conferences, meetings and events. Some non-sale publications such as *Women 2000 and Beyond* and the *Network* newsletter of the Office of the Special Adviser are produced in-house in small print runs. The electronic version of the latter is also posted on the Office web site. The implementation of recommendation 6 will receive further support as a result of the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387 and Corr.1, paras. 79-82), which encourages the dissemination of information online, and inexpensive print formats.

23. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is of the opinion that the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women have made good progress in implementing recommendations 6 (a), (b) and (c). While the collaboration between the Division and the Sales and Marketing Section of the Department of Public Information is meaningful, consultations between the two entities in the planning stage of publications could identify additional material worth publishing, enhance the marketability of planned publications and identify potential target audiences.

Recommendation 7
Marketing data

The Marketing and Sales Section of the Department of Public Information should provide periodic feedback to author departments on sales.

24. The Division for the Advancement of Women was able to obtain statistics whenever it requested it. The Office of Internal Oversight Services has observed that statistics on sales of publications are more readily available than was the case previously, and considers that the concerns raised in recommendation 7 have been adequately addressed.

Recommendation 8
Use of professional journals

The staff of the Division for the Advancement of Women should be encouraged to publish articles in professional journals on the work of the programme on the advancement of women.

25. On the basis of the report of a 1998 expert group, the Division for the Advancement of Women has contributed material for a forthcoming book entitled *National machineries for the advancement of women: mainstreaming gender, democratizing the State?* Some Division staff members have had the opportunity to publish articles in periodicals, most recently an article on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in a regional journal in 2003. The Special Adviser contributed to a book of articles

on Afghanistan.[4] "Heavy workload in the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division, however, restrict the opportunities for staff to publish articles.

26. As part of their participation in conferences, workshops and conventions held by national mechanisms and international and non-governmental organizations, both the Special Adviser and the Director of the Division have made presentations on a wide range of substantive subjects. The Division receives many requests for information on its work and its web site, which provides the only access to intergovernmental processes on gender equality and their outcomes, has a high visitor frequency. The expert group meetings organized by the Division stimulate considerable interest, including from academics and researchers; Division publications are widely disseminated and positive feedback is received from users. The work of the Division relating to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has clearly generated research and articles. It is, however, impossible to know the extent to which the above-mentioned information provides inputs for articles and publications by researchers and advocates.

27. On the basis of the information provided, the Office of Internal Oversight Services concludes that the scope and coverage of the outreach of the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division to policy makers and advocacy groups is good. Outreach to academics and researchers through publications in professional journals prepared by Division staff is limited and, considering the Division's present workload, it is not expected that the situation will change in the near future.

Recommendation 9
WomenWatch and the Division for the Advancement of Women web sites

The WomenWatch and the Division for the Advancement of Women web sites should be improved in the following ways:

(a) The end users' profiles and needs should be determined so that they can be better met through the information and design of the web site;

(b) In posting available documents on the site, priority should be given to time sensitive material such as agenda for upcoming meetings;

(c) The feasibility of extending online dialogues to include preparatory processes for sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women to allow more in-depth participation in these events should be explored.

28. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that an assessment of the WomenWatch web site was conducted in 2001. The assessment found that the site served as a portal to information on work carried to promote gender equality across the United Nations system. It was decided that the site should continue to provide that service and be enhanced. As a result of the assessment, the site was redesigned and the first stage of this process was completed in February 2002 to include a directory of approximately 550 links to on-line gender resources of United Nations organizations. In 2002, the Division for the Advancement of Women initiated internal consultations on ways to improve the user-friendliness of its own web site, on the basis of its understanding of the needs of major target groups. Since then,

[4] Sunita Mehta, ed., *Women for Afghan Women: Shattering Myths and Claiming the Future* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

improvements on the information posted and design of the site have been implemented.

29. End users' profiles are also determined during online discussions organized by the Division, in which participants are asked to provide basic information for statistical purposes. End users' needs can also be determined through messages received via e-mail. The possibility of an online survey to determine the user-friendliness of the web sites is another option being considered by the Office of the Special Adviser and Division. The Division has acquired software which analyses web traffic and which is capable of producing profile reports on visitors. The United Nations web server does not however provide the type of information needed by the software to produce these detailed reports.

30. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that, as part of the process of providing regularly updated information on the two web sites (WomenWatch and Division for the Advancement of Wom) about the Division's work programme, the webmasters for these web sites have given priority to time-sensitive material, posting official documents as soon as they become available in ODS (Official Document System of the United Nations), and have continued to collaborate to ensure that WomenWatch has links to updated information from the web sites of the Division and the Office of the Special Adviser.

31. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that several online discussions were organized during the period. For example, over 360 people participated in a six-week online discussion on gender equality, environmental management and natural disasters, held in 2001, and approximately 500 people participated in two five-week online discussions on the topics "Women and information and communication technologies" and "Women and the media", held in 2002 as part of preparations for the discussion of these questions by the Commission on the Status of Women. Non-governmental organizations have been invited to participate in these online discussions, as have other members of civil society, international organizations and academia.

32. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is of the opinion that significant progress was achieved in implementing recommendations 9 (a), (b) and (c). More progress could be made in assessing users' needs through analysis of e-mail messages and through online surveys, as was suggested by the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that some United Nations agencies were not informed in advance of these online discussions and were unable to participate in them. In comments on an earlier draft of the report, *the Division for the Advancement of Women stated that information on the online dialogue is available though WomenWatch, which is accessible to all parts of the United Nations system. United Nations organizations which can contribute most to the topic of the online discussions are directly informed and involved.*

Recommendation 10
Enhanced collaboration with non-governmental organizations

In the light of the high level of interest of non-governmental organizations and the importance placed on their support and involvement, the following measures should be taken to enable the Division for the Advancement of

Women to facilitate adequately their participation in relevant United Nations activities:

(a) Increase the means and frequency of communication between the Division for the Advancement of Women and NGOs, including more briefings on relevant issues and more open dialogue through various means (e.g., meetings, online discussions).

33. In connection with the need to improve dialogue and communications with non-governmental organizations raised in recommendation 10 (a), the Division for the Advancement of Women has continued to provide substantive and procedural briefings to NGOs on the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and has actively participated with such organizations in joint panels and workshops during and in advance of the sessions of those intergovernmental bodies. The web sites mentioned in paragraphs 28 and 30 above have also provided information to assist the non-governmental organizations in planning for their participation in sessions of the Commission — such as information on the NGO annual consultation meeting and other NGO events. The Division's web site also includes an electronic registration form.

34. The Division's increased interaction with non-governmental organizations has resulted in greater participation of those organizations in the Commission on the Status of Women. The NGO section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, and the Civil Society Service of the Department of Public Information have been partners in these efforts. The forty-fifth session of the Commission, in March 2001, was attended by 653 NGO representatives, and 129 side events sponsored by Governments, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations were held. During the forty-sixth session of the Commission, in March 2002, 700 NGO representatives attended and 109 side events were held. At the forty-seventh session, in March 2003, 684 NGOs representatives were registered and a total of 137 side events were organized. The Bureau of the Commission met with representatives of non-governmental organizations prior to the forty-seventh session. The Division should continue the practice of supporting organizational arrangements that will make the presentation of NGO positions useful to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

35. As a result of developments in the Secretariat highlighting the importance of meaningful interaction between the United Nations and civil society, the Office of the Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women had planned to review the strategic directions of their outreach activities in order to increase their range and impact. The review was completed early in 2003 and work plans are being formulated accordingly.

36. It is the view of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that significant progress was achieved in implementing recommendation 10 (a).

III. Conclusions

37. The advancement of women programme has implemented or taken steps to implement the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and a number of results are already in evidence. For example, the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which reviews reports of State parties, has become more efficient and the backlog of reports awaiting review has decreased considerably. This is due, in part, to the adoption of temporary measures which have enabled the Committee to hold additional meetings and which have allowed States parties on an exceptional basis to combine several overdue reports in a single document. In 2002, the Committee adopted a longer-term strategy to improve the timely submission of States parties' reports and reduce the number of overdue reports, which included a request for a study by the Division for the Advancement of Women of non-reporting States parties.

38. Inter-agency coordination, communication and information have been enhanced, including the sharing of work plans and strategies through the work of task forces of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. The annual Inter-Agency Network meeting has been extended to allow more time for discussions and an Inter-Agency Network web site was created. Coordination between the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women and other entities of the Secretariat has continued to focus on implementing strategies for gender mainstreaming. The technical assistance function of the Division has become more aligned with its analytical and normative work and is being coordinated more closely with the regional commissions and other United Nations agencies such as UNDP, UNIFEM and UNFPA and INSTRAW.

39. There has been good collaboration between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Department of Public Information for the marketing and sales of Division publications. However, to identify material with publishing potential, consultations with the Sales and Marketing Section of the Department of Public Information would be more effective if they were initiated during the formulation stage of the publications programme.

40. Assessments of the programme web sites, the WomenWatch and Division for the Advancement of Women web sites, were conducted and both sites had improved and as a result both sites are providing more up-to-date information on the programme. The WomenWatch web site was redesigned to function more as a portal to United Nations gender resources, with a large number of links to online gender resources of United Nations organizations. Two additional web sites, the Special Adviser's and the Inter-Agency Network's, were created in 2002 and are accessible from the portal. Several online discussions were organized during the period and the reports resulting from those discussions served as background papers for the meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women.

41. The efforts of the Division to facilitate the work of non-governmental organizations have resulted in an increase in the number of NGOs attending the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. The programme web sites have also provided a mechanism for interaction with non-governmental

organizations. While the Division continues to provide substantive and procedural briefings to non-governmental organizations on the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, it should continue to review the effectiveness of the organizational arrangements for the presentation of NGO positions to these intergovernmental bodies.

42. **The follow-up of recommendations in progress should be reported by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the context of the programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005, under the framework of results and self-evaluation reporting.**

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General
for Internal Oversight Services